

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND ACTION-ORIENTED PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

The inclusion of the entrepreneurship education to global educational curricula resulted from the wide recognition of entrepreneurship as an important concept for poverty alleviation, employment generation, wealth creation and economic vitality. Entrepreneurship education is the transference of information and skills relevant for investment opportunity identification, entrepreneurial strategies and effective pursuit of an enterprise to a successful level to students. This involves tackling real problems that inspire and empower students to take the initiative and responsibility for their own learning. However, different approaches have been identified and adopted by different entrepreneurship educators in Nigerian higher institutions. But how effective have these approaches been? This is a question that has not been properly addressed in our educational environment. The adoption of action-oriented pedagogical approaches that enhance critical thinking skills and helps students to identify problems, seek out and evaluate relevant information and resources, and design and carry out plans for solving these problems is vitally important. This research paper is focused on examining the need for the adoption of action-oriented pedagogical approaches in teaching entrepreneurship in our higher institutions for the enhancement of students' entrepreneurial learning and activities before and after their graduation.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship Education, Pedagogy, Action-oriented Pedagogical Approaches, Entrepreneurial Learning and Activities

INTRODUCTION

A survey carried out by the National Universities Commission (NUC) showed that Nigerian University graduates lack basic job competence, oral communication and managerial skills (Nwankwo, 2004). Probably, the findings of this survey led to their recent recommendation for the introduction of entrepreneurship education to all Nigerian Universities both as General Study (GST) and Bachelor of Science Degree (B.Sc) course. Evidences from the Universities in the developed countries show that entrepreneurial education has the potential to transfer and communicate to students the skills and knowledge necessary for their career goal setting. The United Nations published Eight (8) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which ranged from reducing of extreme poverty, providing universal education, ensuring gender equality, assuring child health, providing maternal health, fight HIV/AIDS, ensuring environmental sustainability and global

partnerships. Looking at each of these MDGs and the targets that are set by the United Nations for attaining social and economic development with the intention of achieving international cooperation, there is need to formulate strategies on how best these can be achieved in relation to the specific goals and targets. Adoption of applicable strategies is important as it will be the basis for achieving the set objectives which are considered to be the blue print and plan agreed upon by different development stakeholders and the leading institutions in the world for sustaining humanity as a whole with equality in sharing the resources (Raddy, and Kumar, 2010).

One of the ways for providing universal education is to revise our strategies for teaching students to depart from the traditional approach to the modern approach that will give the students the opportunity to engage in class active participation. This approach ensures that University education becomes a continuous learning scheme and active research based. The adoption of the pedagogy that can ensure effective communication of the contents of curricula to students and enhance their practice of the theoretical aspect of the course is very important. The essence of a new approach to education pedagogy is ensure that students are built and prepared for relevant marketplace through entrepreneurship and skills acquisition. This can be achieved through the introduction of academic pedagogy that is action oriented and student friendly. The objective of this paper is therefore to examine how the adoption of action oriented pedagogy can motivate students interest on entrepreneurship education.

Conceptual Framework/Literature Review

Education Curriculum

Education curriculum is a formal and informal content and process by which learners gain knowledge and understanding, develop skills and alter attitudes, appreciates and values under the auspices of a school (Doll, 1978). It is a plan or programme for all the experiences which the learner encounters under the direction of a school (Oliva, 1988). According to Harris (1999) education curriculum is a lifelong learning plan that helps students with decision making and goal-setting skills, problem solving skills, developing aspirations, beliefs, values, aptitudes, interests, personality characteristics, job-seeking and knowledge of the world of work. Relating the objectives of education curriculum to entrepreneurial education program, Harris (1999) and Chinonye (2008) highlights that the emphasis should ensure that students; (i) understand the concepts related to lifelong learning, interpersonal relationship (include responsible citizenship in terms of job and wealth creation) and career goals; (ii) develop learning skills, social skills, sense of responsibility, and the ability to formulate and pursue educational career goals; (iii) are able to apply their education to their lives so as to be able to contribute to community development and (iv) possess the skills required by either self or paid employment.

Entrepreneurship Education and Curriculum

Entrepreneurial education reorients graduates from job seekers to become job creators or employable. The goal of entrepreneurial education is intended to empower graduates irrespective of their areas of specialization with skills and knowledge that will enable them to start and engage in income yielding venture, if they are unable to secure jobs in the public and private sectors (Bassey and Archibong, 2005). Curriculum is a formal and informal content and process by which learners gain knowledge and understanding, develop skills and alter attitudes, appreciates and values under the auspices of a school (Doll, 1978).

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the processes and practices or methods of teaching and learning. It encompasses, among other things,

overall educational purposes, values, and aims in communicating courses and subjects to student. The generic concept of pedagogical knowledge applies to the understanding how students learn, general classroom management skills, lesson planning, and student assessment. It includes knowledge about techniques or methods used in the classroom; the nature of the target audience; and strategies for evaluating student understanding. A teacher with deep pedagogical knowledge understands how students construct knowledge and acquire skills and how they develop habits of mind and positive dispositions toward learning (Koehler and Mishra, 2009).

Entrepreneurship Pedagogy

Entrepreneurship pedagogy involves different innovative strategies and approaches in the teaching of entrepreneurship. These pedagogies involve both informal activities and programmes designed for entrepreneurial teachers and entrepreneurs for teaching entrepreneurship education. Some of these approaches include the following;

- **Problem-Base Learning (PBL)**

The PBL approach acknowledges that good problems are important as it ‘pique’ students’ curiosity, require analysis and encourage learning’ (White and Reynolds, 1996). Applying PBL to entrepreneurship curriculum enables EDS to be integrated to real business issues into the classroom via authentic problems which come in the form of newspaper write ups, magazine articles, video clips, excerpts from policy documents, company financial reports and role-play to mirror real-life situations(White and Reynolds, 1996). Entrepreneurship education further lends a credible case to suggest that PBL as an educational strategy, may facilitate more meaningful entrepreneurial-learning (Tan, 2004). The objective is to help students formulate their own ideas about starting a new venture and experience the realities of the business world, albeit in a risk free and safe environment. In Problem-base Learning, the tasks to be handled by students are proposed and sponsored by industrial companies and private investors. The process include; formulation of the research problem hypothesis under investigation; identify the knowledge the group need to explore this problem; definition of three specific research tasks to be completed; division of the tasks to different groups; agreement on how the group will work together to proffer solution to the tasks and dissemination of the solution /result to the groups via eg facebook, email, etc. The important of this learning method is that, it stimulates creative thinking and innovation through problem solving, creates a mindset in students/individuals that allows them to see economic opportunities in business ideas that allows them to create their workplace future. PBL focused, experiential learning organized around the investigation and resolution of messy, real world problems. Adopting PBL helps students to make meaningful connections between school and life and learn concepts and principles in specific job situations creating a mindset in them for the realization of their self placement in academic performance so as to be more focused in school.

- **Action-Learning Based Entrepreneurship Training Program**

This strategy was popularized by the work of Mueller/Thornton (2005) called the Practical Entrepreneurship Teaching Engagement (PETE) Model which has been identified by several researchers as seemingly critical components to an effective action-learning program (Mueller/Thornton, 2005). The PETE Model attempts to explain that the presence of certain factors can improve the effectiveness of learning. Action learning is considered as a form of learning through practice and a means of problem-solving in the real life (Mueller/Thornton, 2005; Smith and O’Neil, 2003). Marquardt (2000) identified elements of action-learning to include real problems, fellow leaders in the action learning team, a reflective inquiry process, commitment to action, and focusing on learning. These help to contribute to the building of

critical leadership skills, inculcate the advantages of extraordinary commitment to extra-curricular work and dedication of one's time to learning of enterprise and ethical governance principles within their communities (Marquardt, 2000). Adoption of action-learning based approach to the teaching of entrepreneurial education helps to shift the emphasis away from passive to active learning, thereby enabling students not just to gain experience but also to learn how to do it. This is what Honey and Mumford (1986) termed as the "Reflector" and "Theorist" styles of learning, and not the "Activist" and "Pragmatist". Thus, by taking the learning out of the classroom in this way emphasizing the pragmatist and activist learning styles, not only are the students learners, they are being encouraged to acquire some of the entrepreneurial attributes, values and the behavioral patterns of the entrepreneur (Kirby, 2003a; 2003b), but a fairer, more balanced education system is being created which recognizes and caters for the preferred learning styles of all students (Honey and Mumford, 1986).

- **Experiential Learning or Learning-by-Doing' Approach of Entrepreneurship**

Experiential Learning is core to developing entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes. This needs deep community connections. This approach advocates that entrepreneurship education does not exist and succeed in just very "traditional" environment. It requires experiential learning accompanied by the ambiguities, problems and risk of real world situation in getting involve in business startup and operational activities. Being involved in business activities and entrepreneurship education through enterprise – with using the new venture creation process to help students acquire a range of both business understanding and skills or competences. This involves an inter-disciplinary learning approach and it is usually made of teams consist of two or more students from different fields of study (business, technology, engineering and design). This approach gives the students the opportunity to test their skills and personal limits, and to realize that designing and manufacturability is learned only through practice. It allows them to learn that making mistakes is a characteristic of product development, and valuable experience which can only be gained through working in an interdisciplinary team in cooperation with different departments, universities, companies (Reinikainen1 and Fallast). It has been observed that this approach involves the interdisciplinary composition of working in a team and this can lead to superior results – in achievements for the companies as well as in learning experience. Learning the basics of interdisciplinary working methods and possibilities in it have encouraged the students to test their own skills in commercial way (Reinikainen1 and Fallast).

- **Student-Centered Learning**

Student-Centered learning is a delivery program which gives students a great deal of autonomy over how they learn, when they learn and where they learn (Jones and English (n. d). Unlike other traditional teaching strategies, it is not a passive experience, but rather a deeper learning process. Student-Centered learning methods require students to work in groups to solve complex problems and manage projects on their own. It includes collaborative activities, goal driven tasks, intellectual discovery, activities that heighten thinking and provide practice in learning skills. A combination of new technology and traditional resources is used to provide students with a rich variety of learning experiences. The objective is to make presentations that encourage exposure to problem solving and a wide range of entrepreneurial behaviors. Students are aware that their fellow students assess the actual behaviors and skills used not only to prepare for the case but also its presentation. As such, the presentations seek to encourage "opportunity seeking, taking independent initiatives, actively seeking to achieve goals, coping with and enjoying uncertainty, taking risky actions in uncertain environments, solving problems creatively, commitment to making things happen, flexibly responding to challenges and persuading others" Caird

(1993, cited in Gibb, 1996). Therefore the delivery process (i.e. student centered learning) provides exposure to entrepreneurial behaviors and skills, while the peer assessment provides the direct feedback through which the students learn by doing (Gibb, 1996). It is argued that the interaction of the above-mentioned factors provides the stimuli for the development of entrepreneurial behaviors, skills, and attributes in the learners (students).

Integrative Communication theory

The theory that underpins this study is integrative theory. Integrative communication theory is a theory of cross-cultural adaptation proposed by Young Yun Kim. Integrative communication theory is a reiteration of the 1950s work of Robert Ezra Park titled *Race and Culture* (1950) and Milton Gordon titled *Assimilation in American Life* (1954, 1964). Integrative communication theory postulates that learning modules and curriculum need to be integrated for the achievement of the set objective. This theory states that in designing academic curriculum, there is need for flexibility and adoption of the approach that will help the communicators to blend the content with the context. Adopting of an approach that will enhance learning and teaching methods will help to achieve the main objective of ensuring the entrepreneurship education. The integrative theory assumes that the process of linking the content and context method must be used in curriculum design and failure to do so result to failure in achieving the objective of the course.

Entrepreneurship Education at Covenant University

Entrepreneurship Development Studies (EDS) at Covenant University is one of the custom built courses. It is a one unit course which is being offered by all the students irrespective of their discipline and at all levels for both Alpha and Omega semesters. It is designed in such a way that it has both theory and practical aspects. The theoretical aspect is structured to cover all the basic concepts as regards business idea generation and how to start and run business successfully. While the practical aspect covers about thirty six (36) different fields such as fishery, snail farming, fashion designing, water production, pastries, wood works, making, leather works, computer maintenance, metal fabrication, public speaking, news casting etc. Under the practical aspects, students are given opportunity to choose different vocational areas before graduation from the University. If it is a four year programme, they will cover four different vocational areas and six different vocational areas if it is a five year programme. The practical aspect starts from year three to run through year four or five depending on the years of the programme. The syllabus is designed to accommodate all business areas that will benefit all students either science, art or science. Topics that have to do with life challenging issues are given utmost attention. Different resources persons /practitioners are engaged to teach the practical section, while the lecturers who have passed through the University Train the Trainer's Programme (TTP) in entrepreneurship education are usually engaged to teach the theoretical section.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is relationship between a course curriculum, teaching and learning methods. These concepts require specific skills to enhance education objectives. This means instructors must have the ability to integrate the subject contents, methodological context, communication skill and background knowledge on a topic in order to get the full effect of the text as it is being communicated to students. To ensure that this is achieved, this study therefore makes the following recommendations;

- Entrepreneurship educators should often be provided with adequate training and workshop programmes that will help them to be equipped with the knowledge and skills required by the task in designing the curriculum and

teaching of it.

- Different and relevant pedagogical approaches should be adopted by entrepreneurship teachers to enhance their teaching profession as teachers' professional development offer a one-size-fits-all approach to technology integration when they operate in diverse contexts of teaching and learning.
- Emphasis should be placed on some pedagogical approaches that are more practical oriented than others in entrepreneurship education. This will help to in captivating the interest of the students on the course.
- The university authorities should organize conferences, seminars and workshops for entrepreneurship educators on education pedagogy so as impart on them the required knowledge and skills for their effective delivering of entrepreneurship to students.

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